

March 2, 2020

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Granger:

As the House Appropriations Committee prepares the emergency supplemental to address the ongoing threat of COVID-19, we write in full support of the \$2 billion proposal to reimburse state and local public health departments for the resources they have and will expend to actively respond to COVID-19.

State and local health departments have collectively laid out millions of dollars to contain and prevent the outbreak of COVID-19. In Washington state, the epicenter of COVID-19 in the United States, the Department of Health has spent approximately \$2.3 million since January 21, 2020, and the Seattle King County Public Health department is spending approximately \$56,000 each day to identify, quarantine, and monitor confirmed and potential COVID-19 patients. Snohomish County spent roughly \$200,000 to respond to the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the United States and now has several more confirmed cases.

Public Health serves as the first responder during a health crisis and with no medical countermeasures to combat COVID-19, public health workers' efforts are the best hope to slow the spread of the virus but their resources are limited. The rate of expenditures by state and local public health departments are only expected to accelerate as the number of cases continues to rise and community transmission appears to become increasingly prevalent.

We remind the committee that in response to the Zika virus outbreak in 2016, Congress provided \$44 million to the Public Health Emergency Preparedness cooperative agreement program to restore the prior fiscal year's funds which were reprogrammed for Zika virus response. Every public health department responding to COVID-19 has collectively been forced to reprogram or divert millions of dollars from other priorities to keep their jurisdictions safe, and we believe it is more than appropriate to reimburse and support these entities for taking the lead to protect our communities.

The situation is urgent in Washington state. Governor Jay Inslee has declared a state of emergency and Washington is the home of the first six American victims of COVID-19. We commend the committee for its expedient work to address the threat of COVID-19 and again urge the inclusion of \$2 billion set aside to support the response efforts of state and local public health departments.

Sincerely,

Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress

Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

Denny Heck
Member of Congress

Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress